

DATELINE NO. 70
ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER/NEW YORK

APRIL 14, 1976

A MEDIEVAL WORKSHOP IN NEW YORK
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS... DATELINE...

ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES OF PROGRAMS ON PEOPLE, PLACES
AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, OUR DATELINE IN
NEW YORK CITY, WHERE, NOT LONG AGO, VOA CORRESPONDENT
ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER -- ON A WET AND WINDY DAY --
STEPPED OUT OF AN ELEVATOR AND FOUND HERSELF STANDING
IN THE MIDST OF . . . A MEDIEVAL WORKSHOP.

VOICE: WEST EIGHTEENTH STREET IS FAR FROM BEING ONE OF NEW YORK'S
MORE INTERESTING STREETS. ITS BUILDINGS ARE OLD BUT THEY
HAVE NONE OF THE CHARM THAT SOMETIMES COMES WITH AGE. MOST
OF THEM SERVE AS WAREHOUSES AND A FEW SEEM TO BE USED AS
OFFICES BUT THEIR ANONYMOUS FACADES DO NOT INVITE
EXPLORATION. AT NUMBER ONE FIFTY-FOUR, HOWEVER, THINGS
ARE DIFFERENT. THE FIFTH FLOOR OF THIS WEARY-LOOKING
STRUCTURE IS THE HOME OF GLASS MASTERS, A LIVELY COMPANY
OF YOUNG CRAFTSMEN WHO ARE WORKING IN THE ANCIENT ART OF
STAINED GLASS. STAINED GLASS BRINGS TO MIND GREAT CHURCH
WINDOWS. BUT ITS ROOTS ACTUALLY LIE IN THE FAR EAST AND
MOSLEM WORLDS WHERE IT WAS USED PURELY FOR DECORATION.

STILL, TO WESTERN EYES, STAINED GLASS IS AN EXPRESSION OF
RELIGIOUS DEVOTION. BUT A YOUNG ARTIST NAMED BRUCE BERKMAN
HAD ANOTHER IDEA. HE KNEW THAT THE ARTISANS OF MEDIEVAL
EUROPE HAD ALSO WORKED WITH MANY SECULAR SUBJECTS. IF
THESE WERE COPIED FAITHFULLY AND REPRODUCED IN THE ORIGINAL

VOICE: MANNER THEY MIGHT FIND ACCEPTANCE AS JUST BEAUTIFUL PIECES
(CONT'D)
OF ART. IN NINETEEN SIXTY-NINE, HE AND TWO FRIENDS WENT
INTO BUSINESS AS GLASS MASTERS, INCORPORATED.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- BERMAN

"TO US IT WAS A STROKE OF GENIUS BECAUSE NO ONE HAD EVER
DONE IT BEFORE. AND THE ONLY PLACES ONE COULD SEE A GREAT
WORK OF STAINED GLASS WAS IN A RARE MUSEUM. OR, TRAVEL TO
EUROPE, VISIT THE GREAT CATHEDRALS AND BE OVERWHELMED BY THAT
INCREDIBLE BURST OF COLOR AND LIGHT AND EMOTION WHICH YOU
ARE GREETED WITH WHEN YOU WALK INTO CHARTRES OR SAINTE
CHAPELLE OR ONE OF THE OTHER CATHEDRALS. AND THAT SOMEBODY
COULD HAVE A SMALL PART OF THAT, EVEN ALBEIT A REPRODUCTION
IN THEIR HOUSE, TO ME WAS A FANTASTIC THING."

VOICE: TODAY, GLASS MASTERS IS A THRIVING BUSINESS EMPLOYING
THIRTY PEOPLE. EACH CRAFTSMAN WORKS ALONE. ONE MAY
TRANSFER A DESIGN ONTO A SECTION OF IMPORTED GLASS. ANOTHER
IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PAINSTAKING JOB OF ADDING SUBTLE
COLORS. STILL ANOTHER OVERSEES THE CRUCIAL "FIRING" PROCESS
IN THE KILN (OVEN). ALL THE PIECES ARE UNITED BY STRIPS OF
LEAD AND FINALLY, THE FINISHED WORK IS INSTALLED IN AN IRON
FRAME. GLASS MASTERS TAKES ITS INSPIRATION FROM MANY
SOURCES--A FRAGMENT OF AN OLD ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT, A
PAGE OF MEDIEVAL MUSIC, HERBS GROWING IN AN ENGLISH GARDEN.
JUST NOW THE COMPANY IS EXPERIMENTING WITH "ORIGINAL" WORKS
BY TRANSLATING DRAWINGS FROM BOOKS LIKE "ALICE IN WONDERLAND"
AND "THE WIZARD OF OZ" INTO STAINED GLASS. BRUCE BERKMAN IS
NATURALLY PROUD OF HIS COMPANY'S SUCCESS. BUT HE IS PROUDER
STILL OF THE WAY IT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- BERKMAN

"MOST OF THE TECHNIQUES THAT WE USE AND MOST OF THE TOOLS,
I MIGHT ADD, ARE THOSE THAT WERE USED SIX HUNDRED OR
EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS AGO. OF COURSE, WE'VE TAKEN LIBERTIES
WITH TIME AND WE HAVE GONE TO CERTAIN METHODS, MECHANICAL
METHODS, TO ALLOW US TO REPRODUCE CERTAIN OF THE PIECES

TAPE: IN THE QUANTITIES THAT WE NEED BECAUSE OF OUR SUCCESS.
(CCNT'D) BUT, WHAT WE HAVE TRIED TO DO IS TO RETAIN THE SENSE OF INTEGRITY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED WHEN IT WAS FIRST MADE. AND I THINK IF A CRAFTSMAN CAME BACK FROM THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY HE WOULDN'T LOOK AT IT AND TURN UP HIS NOSE. HE'D SAY, "HOW DID YOU DO THAT? HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO GET ALL THE COLORS ON ONE PIECE OF GLASS AND ONLY FIRE IT ONE TIME? BECAUSE I USED TO HAVE TO FIRE IT THIRTEEN TIMES." AND I THINK HE'D BE DELIGHTED TO WALK INTO OUR STUDIO. I HOPE HE WOULD BE."

VOICE: THE STAINED GLASS PIECES WHICH COME FROM THE HANDS OF THESE CRAFTSMEN ARE NOW BEING SOLD IN MANY PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES. AT FIRST, BRUCE BERKMAN SAID, IT WAS A MATTER OF EDUCATING THE PUBLIC TO THE IDEA THAT THIS ART FORM HAD A PLACE IN THEIR HOMES. NOW THEY RESPOND TO IT NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT IS BEAUTIFUL BUT BECAUSE IT IS "REAL," MADE BY HAND BY SOMEONE WHO CARES ABOUT WHAT HE IS DOING.

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE, ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF VOA PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT _____ (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER.....DATELINE. THIS IS _____.

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